August 11, 2008

Mr. Louis Lyons
Humiston Trust
318 West Madison Street
Pontiac, IL 61764

RE: Acquisition of Lincoln Era property

Dear Loui:

Thank you for taking the time to visit with Donovan Gardner and me on Friday, August 8th. We will try and set forth in this letter the essence of our request to the Humiston Trust.

All of us who've lived in Pontiac for any length of time have heard the stories about the house at 401 West Livingston Street and its connection with Abraham Lincoln. Last December, we had Guy Fraker as our speaker at the Livingston County Historical Society's annual meeting. Mr. Fraker, a Bloomington lawyer, has been quite involved in the area's Lincoln history. We explained to Mr. Fraker that this was the only property remaining in Livingston County that had any physical connection with President Lincoln.

Mr. Fraker's admonition to the society was that we should make every effort to save this property. That towns like Decatur and Champaign had many properties connected with Lincoln but all have been torn down and redeveloped. There are few towns left which have actual physical properties which can be tied to a visit of Abraham Lincoln.

The house at 401 West Livingston Street was known by many people as the Thalman house and has distinctive architectural style. It was built before the Civil War by a family by the name of Strevell. In 1~~858~~ 1860, Abraham Lincoln addressed a lecture at the Presbyterian Church, (that building is now gone,) and afterwards spent the evening at the Strevell's home where he received some of the prominent citizens of the community. Abraham Lincoln was being considered at that time as a potential Republican presidential candidate. One story which survives from that evening is a discussion of the height of Mr. Lincoln and how that height was marked on the door frame of the front parlor of the Strevell home.

The City of Pontiac is interested in the property as its potential for an added attraction to a growing tourism business. With the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birthday and the establishment of the Presidential Library Museum in Springfield, there has been a marked increase in visitors particularly down the I-55 corridor. Some of these visitors have stopped in this community but more have stopped in Bloomington and Springfield where there are developed sites connected to Abraham Lincoln. The city while interested in this property has no funds to purchase the property.

We are concerned that the property, which has already deteriorated to some great extent, if not purchased and held in friendly hands, too will soon be only a memory. We have agreed to a verbal contract to purchase this property for $40,000. Our intent is to make a gift of it to the city.

To make a gift of this property to the city would require $40,000, the purchase price of the house. We have agreed to make a contribution of one-fourth of that amount. We are hopeful that the Humiston Trust and/or the Byrne Trust would consider this project for a contribution of a like amount. With 50 percent of the needed funds to purchase the house in hand, we would then go to the community in an effort to raise the additional money. The support of your trust, we believe, would be crucial in our efforts to raise this money from local industry and citizens.

To us the Lincoln House, as we call it, is a piece of our history that is worth preserving. It can be an educational tool as well as an attraction to bring other visitors to our community. Tourism does result in support for our local businesses and tax revenues for our city.

You will find attached to this letter a documentation about the house and a copy of the picture as it appeared in earlier days.

We earnestly ask you to join us in this effort to save this historic structure. We believe that there are the support and enthusiasm in the community to complete the job.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Donovan Gardner
417 W. Henry Street, Pontiac, IL 61764

Thomas W. Ewing
1647 Mockingbird Lane, Pontiac, IL 61764

Enclosures